

Which agricultural model for youth employment?

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With 440 million young people¹ entering the labour force by 2030², youth employment is one of the major challenges for African economies and societies.

240 million of these young people are likely to live in rural areas, albeit with significant differences between countries (Fig.1).

¹Aged 15-24
²Aged 15-64

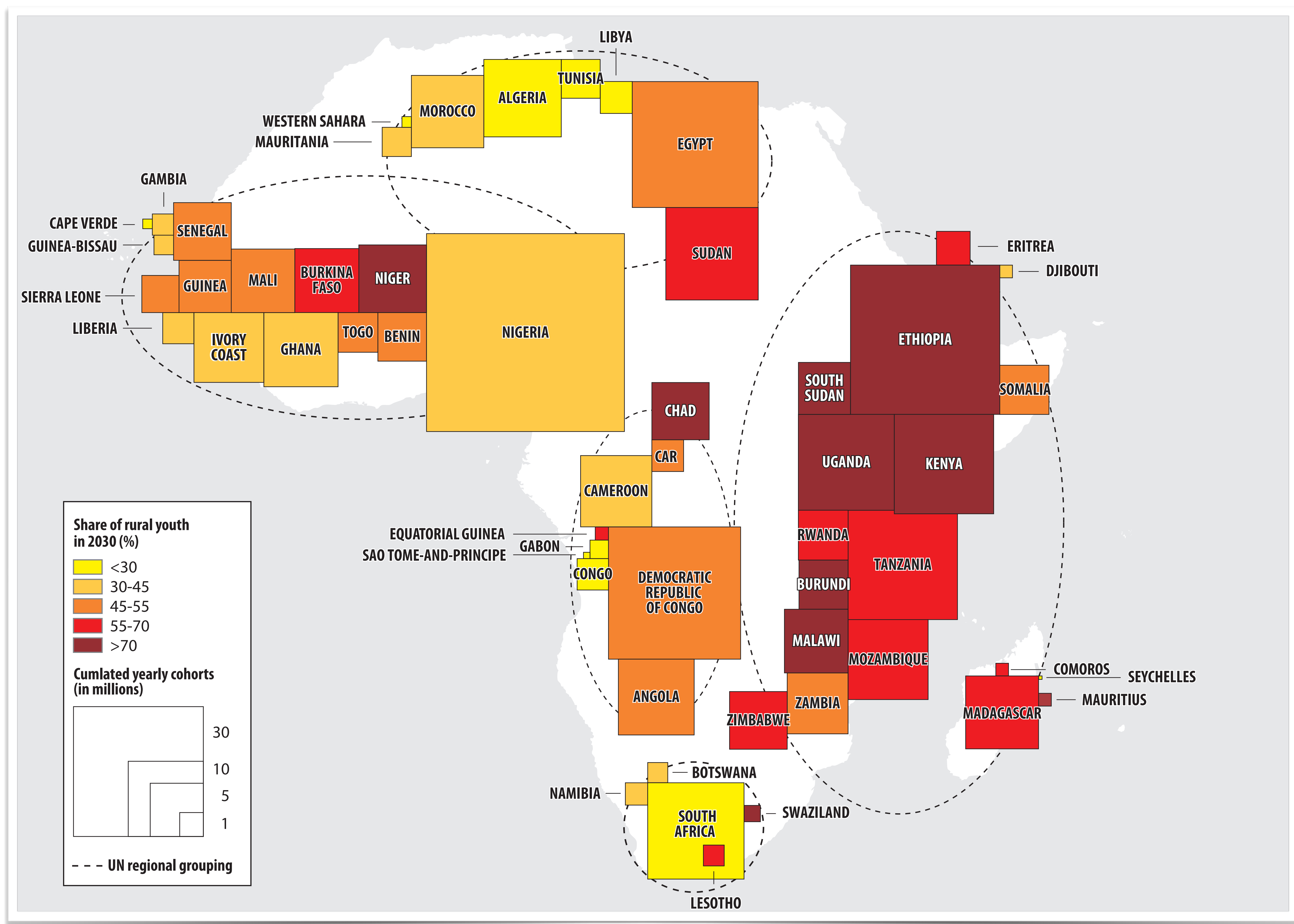


Fig.1. Number of young people entering the workforce between 2015 and 2030
Source: Adapted from NEPAD-CIRAD Atlas, spread 2

Solving a major challenge for Africa



Fig.2. Structure of employment in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2014
Source: NEPAD-CIRAD Atlas, spread 2

The challenge for Africa is to provide job opportunities while most of the labour force is still engaged in family farming and other informal activities (Fig.2). If not, social and political tensions are expected to grow and migrations to escalate.

The possible solutions include education and skill improvement and a more conducive environment for economic diversification. However, agriculture will still play a major role for employment.

The choice of appropriate agricultural models will be critical: inadequate strategies could result in environmental, economic and social unsustainability.

In many regions (e.g. the Senegal River delta, Fig. 3), different types of agriculture compete for access to natural resources (land, water, soil fertility). They have different impacts on income distribution through farm output and employment (Fig.4).

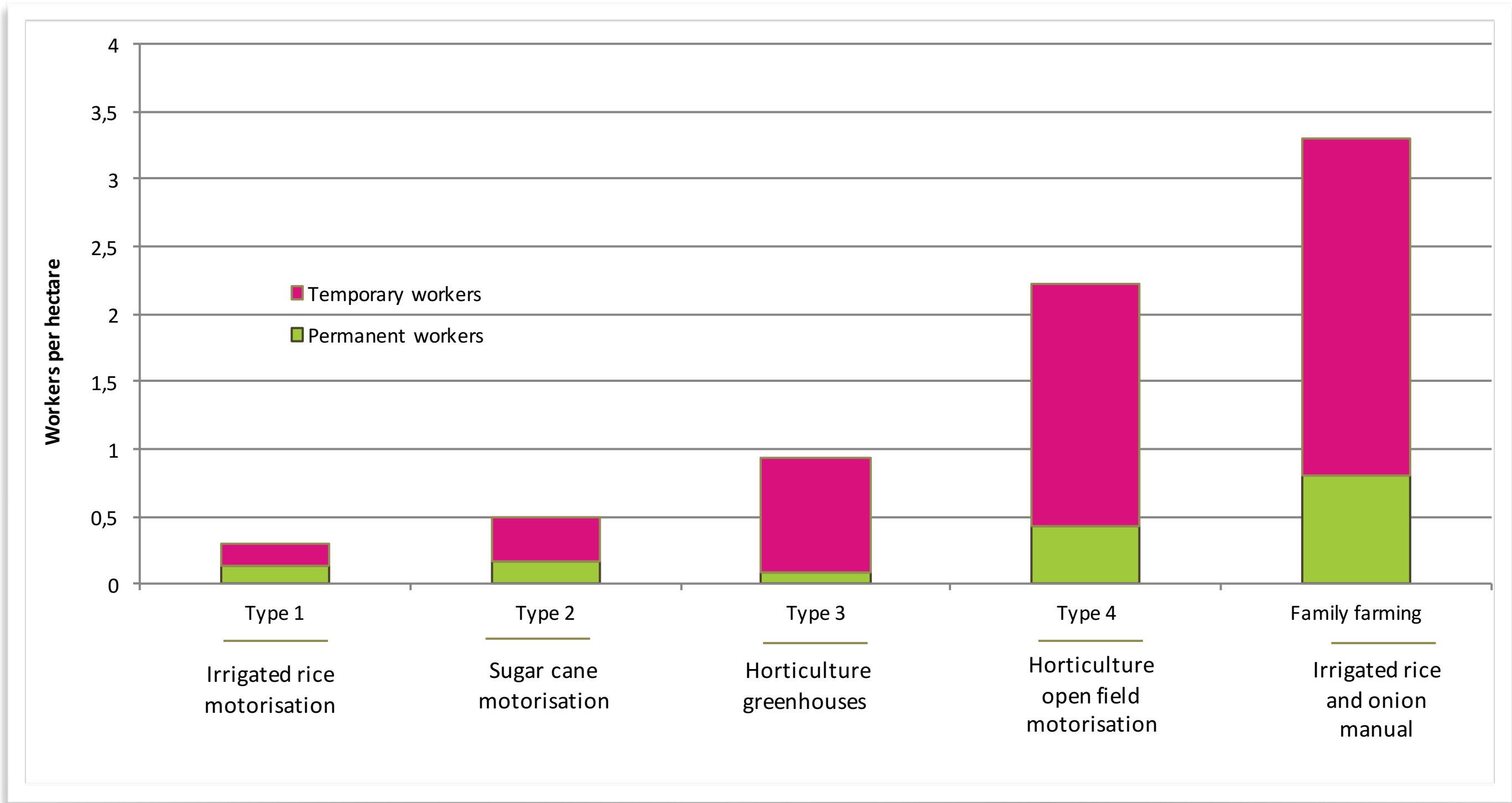


Fig.4. Comparing labour content between different agricultural systems
Source: ENDA Pronat, UGB, ISRA (work in progress)

Governments must discuss with investors and favour projects that:

- are compatible with regional specificities (population density, social acceptability, land availability, farm structures)
- tally with local stakeholders' needs (revenues, jobs and jobs for young people in particular, equipment and infrastructures)
- benefit the country (added value, tax revenue, regional development, employment).

Governments must support family farming because:

- it represents the overwhelming majority of agriculture
- it is more labour-inclusive
- it has historically shown its ability to innovate, develop and modernize.

To make agriculture more attractive, public policies must:

- reduce risks and ensure a better market environment
- support farmers' organizations
- foster the adoption of environmentally friendly practices
- promote decent working conditions and a legal framework (with rights and status for young women and men)
- improve access to services in rural areas.

A vibrant agricultural sector is key for increasing farm incomes and rural demand and is a driver for rural diversification resulting in new upstream and downstream job opportunities and regional development.

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